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Housekeepers' chat

Tuesday, October 27, 1931

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "The Mailbag." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, and the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A., and the New York State College of Home Economics.

Bulletins available: "Chrysanthemums for the Home."

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So many stamps, and stamped envelopes and pennies have been arriving in my mail lately along with requests for bulletins or advice that I'm sure I ought to explain the bulletin situation to you more clearly than I have. Almost every bulletin or leaflet that I mention in my chats is a free publication written and printed to give help to the citizens of this country. If you want a copy of any one of these booklets, you don't have to pay for it and you don't have to pay postage on it. It's yours just for the asking.

Now about your letters containing requests for advice on some problem of your own. I send those questions to the different specialists and they answer you direct. These letters of special advice also go to you free of charge.

Write me, whenever you want to, for bulletins, recipes or help on housekeeping problems, but save your stamps, coins or stamped envelopes.

One letter today came from a bachelor--a bachelor who lives up in Gig Harbor, Washington. I've never been there but I was very pleased to have the letter. Guess what he wrote for. The leaflet of green tomato recipes. He said his vines were full of green tomatoes and he wanted to know how to use them up. My guess is that he'll put up a whole big batch of green tomato mincemeat and then one of these days have his best girl and her mother in to see what delicious food a man can prepare from tomatoes that might have gone to waste on the vines.

Another letter brings me a short article on using apple juice in fruit jellies. This item comes from the New York State College of Home Economics.

Apple juice combines well with any fruit for jelly, because it has a high pectin content and a mild flavor. The juice of quince, black raspberry, elderberry, pineapple, peach and other fruits low in pectin may be combined with apple juice for delicious jellies.

To prepare the apple juice, look over the fruit carefully. Remove the blossom and stem ends and any imperfect parts but do not remove the skin. Practically all fruits require cooking to extract the juice, and apples, which are not very juicy, should be covered with water while cooking. When the fruit is tender, turn it into a jelly bag and strain. Do not squeeze the bag because this makes the jelly cloudy. A second and third extraction may be made by returning the pulp to the kettle and covering it with water and simmering slowly for thirty minutes.

In combining apple juice with other fruit juices for jelly, equal measures of each juice may be used, and two-thirds as much sugar as juice. Rapid cooking gives a bright, clear product. When several drops flow together and sheet from the spoon, the jelly should be poured into clean hot glasses and sealed when cold.

Apple juice also can be used for fancy jellies in different colors and flavors. An old-fashioned fancy jelly popular with our grandmothers was made by placing a rose leaf or a pineapple geranium leaf in the glass of jelly as it was being filled. This gave an attractive looking mold of jelly with a delicate flavor.

Apple jelly may also be made in different colored layers. Tint separate measures of juice with a little fruit coloring in red or green. Pour them alternately in the glass, allowing each layer to cool enough to form a film over the top before adding the next.

Marashino cherries may be sliced very thin and the circular sections dropped into a glass of clear apple jelly when it is beginning to stiffen. A spray of mint added to the fruit while it is cooking gives a pleasant mint flavor. Such jelly may be tinted green.

When I read those suggestions, I said to myself,

"There are some nice ideas for homemade Christmas gifts. A basket of small, dainty, fancy jellies with a sprig of holly attached ought to make the most welcome of gifts."

But, dear me. If I got started talking about Christmas, there's no telling when I shall have time to answer the rest of the questions waiting a reply.

Now here is a question from Florida: "Can you tell me how to clean ordinary plastered and papered walls and ceilings?"

Ordinary plastered and papered walls and ceilings should be cleaned with a soft wall brush or a broom covered with soft cloth such as cotton flannel. Use light, overlapping strokes in cleaning. Heavy strokes, you see, rub the dirt in. Cotton batting is good for cleaning places that soil more quickly than the rest--for example, the wall over radiators, registers and stoves. The wall should be rubbed lightly with the cotton, which should be turned as it becomes soiled. There are on the market, commercial pastes and powders for cleaning wall papers, but these need to be applied by an expert. An amateur is likely to leave a streaked wall if he attempts to use them.

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"How many times does a floor need re-waxing?" asks a housekeeper in Texas.

With moderate use a floor needs re-waxing only two or three times a year. Applying too much wax is a common mistake. The extra wax lies on the surface in a soft coat that collects dust and is easily marred. To clean a waxed floor, sweep it with a soft brush or a dust mop entirely free from oil. Oil softens wax and should never be used on it in any way. Occasionally a waxed floor should be given a more thorough cleaning with a cloth wrung out of warm soapy water, or, better still, with a cloth moistened with turpentine or gasoline. Water dulls and whitens a waxed floor. Turpentine or gasoline dissolves the film of dirty wax on the surface leaving it bright. However, in using gasoline and turpentine, always remember that these are inflammable. Don't use them near an open fire, a lighted gas jet or a lighted match. And never keep a large quantity of gasoline standing around in an open vessel.

Here's an easy one. "Please tell me how to remove paint and varnish, which have been splattered on the window pane."

Paint or varnish splatters on glass may be dissolved with turpentine or alcohol, or rubbed off with a dull knife. Uncle Ebenezer says that an old razor blade is very convenient for this purpose.

There's a new edition of the bulletin "Chrysanthemums for the Home" just out. About this time of year I always wish that I had taken to raising this decorative flower in my garden. At a football game last Saturday, the large chrysanthemums worn by the women made the whole crowd look extra gay and festive. Even the smaller varieties give the yard and garden a holiday appearance. Here are a few notes from the bulletin about them:

"Chrysanthemums are of little value as hardy plants in the extreme North, but they can be grown with success over most of the remaining country. In the amateur's garden these flowers require very simple treatment and yield large displays of blooms, in many different colors and forms. Although they may be grown from seed, they are usually raised from cuttings or divisions of established plants. These, like seedlings, come to full maturity and flower profusely in a single season, and, in turn, furnish material for propagation the following year.

The plants require for their best development a rich, well-drained soil, an abundance of light and air, sufficient room to develop into good bushes, and annual division and replanting in newly fertilized soil."

Tomorrow, as I promised you last week, we'll discuss Hallowe'en parties and some menus for the occasion. The Menu Specialist has planned an inexpensive Hallowe'en dinner party and a more elaborate one. Recipes, too, of course.

